

# Nation's First Re-entry Facility Offers Progressive Programming to Prisoners

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Job training, education and money management give offenders hope

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Governor Mitch Daniels

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J. David Donahue,  
Commissioner





Indianapolis, Indiana - (July 19, 2006) - One of the major disconnects for newly released offenders is their inability to sustain themselves in a rapidly growing economy. The reality of incarceration for many offenders is that their life remains on pause while the world continues to move on. Factors such as these are being addressed through the opening of the nation's first re-entry facility – the Plainfield Re-Entry Educational Facility (PREF).

"This facility is the first of its kind in Indiana to give offenders the best tools to be successful law-abiding citizens in their communities. It's long overdue that we recognize those sent to prison eventually return to their communities, and it's in the best interests of public safety and communities that we prepare for their return," said Governor Mitch Daniels.

Currently 97 percent of Indiana's adult offenders serve their prison terms and then return to their communities to start rebuilding their lives. Of that number in Indiana, 39.3 per cent will return to prison within 3 years. By reducing the number of re-offending individuals, Indiana taxpayers can save millions of dollars.

The goal set by Indiana Department of Correction Commissioner J. David Donahue is to partner with state agencies, family and community organizations.

Commissioner Donahue and PREF Facility Superintendent, Curt Correll, along with community partnerships, are trying to provide a clear path into the community for released offenders. To help reintegrate offenders back to society, PREF creates an environment inside the facility that more closely models what they can expect in the communities.

"This is being made possible by the involvement from businesses that get it," and he goes on to state

that, "helping these offenders learn skills and understand how to provide for themselves outside of our facility will eventually benefit all taxpayers. Lincoln Bank and Aramark are the companies that didn't ask the question, 'What are we going to get out of this?' They understand the meaning of re-entry," said Superintendent Curt Correll.

Superintendent Correll became concerned about the fact that only about a dozen of his 179 offenders had ever had a bank account. With this in mind, a new program, which will be unveiled July 19, 2006, will allow PREF residents to own and manage a facility bank account. The unprecedented initiatives, like providing financial responsibility programming, taken by PREF are something that no other facility in the nation has ever provided to offenders. Furthermore, Indiana is implementing this program without using any additional taxpayer dollars.

Lincoln Bank President Jerry Engle agrees that this program will be a benefit to all and has stated, "Being a community bank we live and work in the neighborhoods where these men will be released. Lincoln Bank wants to play its part in the successful re-entry of offenders, which have served their sentence, back into the community and feel simply that this is the right thing to do."

Under the leadership of Governor Mitch Daniels, Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) has partnered with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) to place a BMV employee at PREF. This partnership gives PREF offenders the ability to be issued both State Identification Cards, as well as Indiana Driver's Licenses, where applicable. To help validate the processing of these identification cards, PREF has partnered with the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) so that birth certificates can be obtained.

"Obtaining a valid identification card is a critical first step to reducing recidivism and helping individuals fit back into society. A successful transition into the community is a win-win for all Hoosiers. The Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles is pleased to partner with the Department of Correction as we go forward with this innovative program," said BMV Commissioner Joel Silverman.

PREF has also partnered with ISDH so that disease management, nutrition, tobacco cessation, and sexually transmitted disease classes can be offered.

PREF is in the process of setting up pre-release applications for Medicaid, Vocational Rehabilitation, Child Support and Paternity, Medicare, and Mental Health and Addiction services.

Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has detailed a staff member to assist PREF residents with finding employment soon after release. Finding employment after release is the fundamental key to reducing recidivism. DWD Commissioner Ronald L. Stiver has stated, "The Department of Workforce Development is excited to participate in this innovative effort, and will do all it can to ensure that program participants are equipped with the necessary job skills to gain sustained employment."

Showing the DWD's dedication to the re-entry efforts, Commission Stiver states, "We've said time and

time again that one of our main goals is to raise the skills level of all of our citizens to successfully prepare them for the 21st Century workplace, and this effort is yet one more step forward toward reaching that goal."

IDOC has partnered with ARAMARK Correctional Services to develop a program entitled Inmate to Workmate. To better equip ex-offenders with the tools necessary to secure employment, this program is designed to provide inmates with high level culinary and food service training and practical work experience. The phased program is made up of vocational training classes, mentoring and coaching, testing, tracking, teaching, certification, and job interview assistance.

ARAMARK is proud to be a partner in Commissioner Donahue's re-entry initiative," said Tim Campbell, President, ARAMARK Correctional Services. "It is a proven fact that the sooner a released offender finds meaningful employment the less likely that individual will return to a life of crime. Our Inmate to Workmate program provides participants with hands-on training and certification. It has proven that by providing offenders with education and life skills, everyone wins. The offender graduates with a nationally recognized certification that will help them gain employment and the local community benefits from an increase in the number of trained workers. We enthusiastically support and applaud what Commissioner Donahue and Governor Daniels are accomplishing here."

Ivy Tech Community College has partnered with IDOC to begin programming in Logistics Management, Hospitality and Entrepreneurship. The Entrepreneurship program makes a great impact with ex-offenders because the program allows them to form their own business that is based upon skills learned over the several years spent incarcerated. Furthermore, programs continue to be developed so that released offenders can better qualify for employment opportunities after release.

"Ivy Tech Community College is dedicated to providing all Hoosiers with an education that is relevant in today's marketplace," said Dr. Rob Jeffs, Vice President for Workforce & Economic Development at Ivy Tech Community College. "Through Ivy Tech's partnership with the Plainfield Re-Entry Educational Facility, exiting offenders will be equipped with the skills needed to obtain good paying jobs and successfully contribute to Indiana's growing economy."

Commissioner Donahue envisions that as the benefits are realized and the program's growth continues other companies will be attracted to and partner with PREF and IDOC.

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## **About The Department of Correction**

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers.

The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.